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SENSITIVE
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FOR DRL/ILCSR (SMORGAN), G/TIP (LCDEBACA), AND NEA/MAG
(MHAYES)
ALSO FOR DOL/ILAB (LSTROTKAMP, RRIGBY, AND TMCCARTER)

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [EIND](#) [ETRD](#) [KTIP](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: TUNISIA: CHILD LABOR AND FORCED LABOR REPORT

REF: A. STATE 131997
[1](#)B. 09 TUNIS 76

Sensitive but unclassified; please protect accordingly.

[1](#)1. (SBU) In 2009, there were no significant changes in the Government of Tunisia's efforts to combat the worst forms of child labor. The information on Tunisia in the Department of Labor's 2008 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor remains accurate, to the best of Post's knowledge. UNICEF's Tunis office reported that it did not have any statistics for 2009 or 2008 under the category of child labor. Likewise the ILO office covering Tunisia did not have any data on child labor. The Government of Tunisia has not responded to our requests for meetings on this subject.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Tasking 1/TVPPRA - Child Labor used in the production of goods: The Embassy has anecdotal information that in Tunisia children under 16 work mainly during school holidays and primarily in the artisanal sector and the agricultural sector. However, this practice does not appear to be widespread nor does it appear to be an extreme form of child labor; instead, it is a traditional practice in family businesses. UNICEF reported that the GOT did not take any new measures or initiatives in 2009 to combat child labor. International NGO experts believe that the number of children reported to have left school before graduating could provide a rough approximation of the potential size of the problem. (Note: We do believe there is some correlation between the drop-out rate and entry into the labor force, but do not believe it is an absolute correlation. End Note.) According to GOT statistics in 2009, 99.1 percent of eligible children were enrolled in the first year of school, 97.3 percent were enrolled in primary school, but only 76.1 percent were enrolled in secondary school.

[1](#)3. Tasking 2/TDA - The following responses are keyed to questions in paragraph 21 of ref A:

2A. 1) Children are seen working primarily in the informal sector and most often during the summer vacation. They are present in the street selling flowers, cigarettes, and other small items; in markets helping the family or running errands; in small, usually, family-run stores, and as apprentices in various small scale businesses like car mechanics and barber shops. Some children, primarily girls are also used as domestic help. Additionally, there are anecdotal reports of children working in the agricultural sector.

2A. 1) contd. Child labor in Tunisia is not widespread because school is mandatory and free to the age of 16 and there are laws limiting child labor. However, the laws are not always enforced. There are still school expenses that some families find difficult to pay. Some children are expected to help augment the family's income during school

vacations, and children who are orphans, or have other family problems, are sometimes made to fend for themselves. In April 2009 a Tunis court convicted a Tunisian woman to three years in prison for subjecting a seven year old girl to domestic servitude and physical abuse. A study published by two Tunisian sociologists reported in April 2009 that many young women and girls work come from the western province of Jendouba to work as domestic in the larger cities. The report also noted the paucity of official statistics on domestics and the reluctance of people to talk about the issue.

2A. 2) According to UNICEF, the GOT has not published any data on child labor for 2009, 2008, or 2007. A UNICEF global report on child protection listed no data on child labor for Tunisia from 1999-2008. The Tunisian French language daily Le Temps published two articles on child labor in 2009 (May 18 and April 1) documenting that the phenomenon exists mainly in the form of children working in their family business. The articles also confirmed the lack of government statistics on the issue.

2B. 1) No new laws were enacted in 2009; 2) Tunisia's laws regarding child labor are adequate when they are enforced. The law against child labor specifies that children under the age of 16 are allowed to work only for limited hours in family establishments and only as long as it does not damage their health or mental development or prevent them from attending school. Children under the age of 18 cannot do any type of hazardous work.

2C. 1) The Ministry of Social Affairs, Solidarity, and Tunisians Abroad has the primary responsibility for enforcing the child labor laws. However, the national labor union

(UGTT) also has the ability to do work inspections and has a department specifically responsible for women, young workers, and associations. The Ministry of Women, Family, Children, and Senior Citizen's Affairs employs a child protection delegate in each province who has the authority to intervene in certain cases. 2) We know that the GOT does have institutional mechanisms for sharing information across ministries and agencies but we do not know how effectively this works. 3) We have not heard of any specific mechanism for making complaints about hazardous and forced child labor violations, however both the UGTT and the Ministry of Social Affairs have the ability to make complaints. Kalima, a Tunisian on-line independent news magazine that is not always accurate, reported January 29, 2010 that after a complaint by the regional delegate for child protection, the police in Gabes opened an investigation on January 20 into reports that a group of children had been sexually abused by Libyan tourists. Without more specific information from the GOT we do not have the data to answer questions 4-14.

2D. 1) The GOT does not have agencies or personnel dedicated to the enforcement of child trafficking. Questions 2D (2-12): We do not have the data to answer these questions without specific information from the GOT. 13) Tunisia did not experience armed conflict during this reporting period or in the recent past.

2E. 1) The GOT has laws against child labor but according to UNICEF and ILO did not have an active program to specifically combat the problem in 2009. We reviewed the 2009 budget and could not identify any programs specifically related to child labor or child exploitation. 2E (2-7) Without specific information from the GOT, it is not possible to answer these questions related to the GOT's programs.

2F. The GOT does have officials responsible for investigating child labor issues, but the GOT did not have a specific program to eliminate or prevent child labor in 2009, nor did it integrate the issue in other social programs.

2G. Without talking directly to the GOT about its efforts it is not possible to infer from information provided in the press, or by the responsible international organizations that the GOT took any action specifically to combat child labor in

[1](#)2009.

GRAY